

Pulling  
the "Pack"

# TALON



# Talon

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## On the Cover

Soldiers from Naval Mobile Construction Battalion-133 rebuild a bridge across the Spreca River. (Photo by Sergeant Gary Hicks, see page 3).

"For a soldier seeing his officer the first to put his hand to the task, not only realizes the need of haste too, but is ashamed not to work, and afraid to disobey orders;..." – Onasander, *The General*, AD 58

## The Task Force Eagle Web site is located at [www.tfeagle.army.mil](http://www.tfeagle.army.mil)

The Task Force Eagle web site offers breaking news and photos on its web site. The Web site provides information concerning the Turk, Russian, and NORDPOL Brigade assigned to Task Force Eagle, as well as U.S. soldiers stationed in Bosnia. The Talon On-line is updated every Saturday.

By Command Sergeant Major  
**Carl E. Christian**  
*Task Force Eagle CSM*

My time is at an end and it is time to bid farewell. I have said it many times; "This is the best deployment I have been on in my career." The biggest reason I can say this is directly because of the people that are here. I have many thanks to give as I depart the AOR and there are far too many to name each one of you individually. Please accept this article as my thanks to all. Thanks to the DOD civilians who are here making our lives a little more normal with the services they provide, and always doing it with smiles on your faces. Thanks to the Brown and Root employees that have made this place as close to home as one can get in a deployed theater. You always are there to support and in most cases go beyond the expectations of what was asked. Thanks to the local nationals who work in our base camps and as interpreters for sharing your customs, foods and traditions. You have a beautiful country that is worth all the hard work you are putting into it to make it better. Good luck to you. Thanks to NORDPOL, Russian and Turkish Brigades for being such a great part of the team and sharing experiences with the U.S. military making us all better in what we do. The same can be said to all the sister services, AIR FORCE, ARMY, MARINES, and NAVY who have brought so much to the mission, making a stronger task force because of the expertise each has in what you do. Thanks to all the many soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines that keep the train moving down the right track with all the changes and challenges that hit us each day. You have made my job exceptionally easy because of the professional way you have executed your missions. Thanks to the Talon crew who waited patiently for my articles as I finished them a little behind the deadline



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# Seabees repair bridge to reunite communities separated by war

Story and photo by Sergeant Gary Hicks  
196th Mobile Public Affair Det.

Spanning a small meandering river near Camp Cassion stands a trestle bridge that was built by Romanians prior to World War II. For over forty years, the iron structure was used by trains transporting cargo across the former Yugoslavia and Europe before being converted to a highway surface.

The local people used the bridge to trade crops and visit friends or relatives on the other side. However, during the recent Yugoslav civil war it was struck by a mortar round and rendered useless.

The bridge that was once used to connect a community became a barrier between the Bosnian Federation and the Republika Srpska.

Almost five years later, Naval Mobile Construction Battalion-133 is helping to reunite the community separated by war.

The Seabees' vertical platoon, labored for four days recently using wood and cutting, welding and hammering steel to repair the antique structure.

"It's been labor intensive repairing this old blown up bridge, but the feedback from the local people has been rewarding," explains Builder Third Class Chris Albert of Lake Winnisakie, N.H. "The people have said that they are really looking forward to being able to visit their family and friends."

The Kanroos of NMCB-133 used 240 feet of steel beams, over 4,200 feet of lumber and 150 pounds of nails in the reconstruction of the trestle bridge.

Just a few days into the project, people from both sides of the Spreca River were walking across the freshly welded I-beams to visit one another.

"This bridge will help the economy, but more importantly reunite friends and family that were separated by the war, and bring us all closer together," said one local man to an interpreter.

It has been said, "fences make good neighbors." However, in the Spreca area, good neighbors have been separated long enough.



Steel Worker Third Class Jason Misleh and a Swedish soldier move a timber into place.

Through the efforts of the Seabees and other SFOR personnel, the people of this war-torn region are making progress toward lasting peace.

## CSM continued from page 2

for submission. Thanks to the spouses back at home for all the extra work, caring and understanding you give making it easier for us to focus and do our jobs. Thanks to all the children who do without their moms and dads for the birthdays, soccer games and bedtime stories. Thanks also to all the other children and adults in the United States and Germany who continue to remember and support our military members with all the "Any Soldier" letters and "goodie boxes." Thanks to the Commanders and Sergeants Major for supporting me over these ten months and making it a great time in my life. Thanks to the Assistant Division Commander (FWD) and Chief of Staff who made me feel welcome into the command group and who keep

this multinational organization going in the same direction. Thanks to the Regimental Commander for giving me the flexibility to be both his and the CG's CSM. Finally, to Major General Ellis who has allowed me to do my job. Sir you are definitely a soldier's General. You are always working with the welfare and concerns of the soldiers and their families foremost in your decisions and actions, "IRON SOLDIERS." Thanks to everyone for all for the extra hours you all put into getting the job done. Keep safety and force protection the number one thing on your lists as you continue the mission and as you go home. And, always remember that "TODAY IS THE BEST DAY TO BE A SOLDIER."



# Nordic-Polish Brigade Change of Command ceremony

Story by First Lieutenant Lillian Sydenstricker  
196th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

Photo by Specialist Matidle Casado-Lebron  
55th Signal Company

The parade field was filled with distinguished guests. The colors of nine nations were gallantly flying in the slight breeze as the Turkish Band, in their bright red uniforms, started the ceremony that will sing through history.

On June 18 Brigadier General Kari Rimpi relinquished his command to Brigadier General Mieczyslaw Bieniek.

Nine nations have pulled together for one thing — peace in Bosnia. As their motto claims, “One Mission-One Team.”

Located on the outskirts of Doboj, these great nations have worked and served under Brigadier General Rimpi, of Finland for the last six months.

“We are here for the peace to last. NORDPOL is here to help peace and we will go home when the mission is complete,” said Rimpi.

The incoming commander, Brigadier General Bieniek, 47, of Poland, will work with the nine nations to continue the peace operation.

“The brigade has earned its reputation through hard work and efficiency. It is not necessarily an easy task to make nine different nations pull together,” noted Bieniek.

The United States was among the nine nations that were stationed at the NORDPOL Brigade. “It was great to participate and a privilege to work with the other nations on daily patrols and activities,” commented Captain William Zemp, 27, of Charleston, S.C.

Major General Larry R. Ellis, Commander, Multinational Division-North, praised the brigade for their outstanding achievements and devotion to the mission during their peace keeping efforts here.

“Through dedication to duty, personal sacrifice, and polished professionalism, you have maintained the fragile peace in this war-torn land—a truly honorable accomplishment,” said Ellis. He said that their faith in the traditions of peacekeeping has continued to prepare this land to live in peace.

“Today marks another significant milestone in the brief history of this multinational brigade of peacekeepers,”

Ellis said.

Rimpi also recognized the U.S. soldiers for their accomplishments during their deployment for Operation Joint Guard. During the ceremony he gave each U.S. soldier that served under his command a Certificate of Achievement.

Rimpi will fill the post of Deputy Chief of Operations for the Finnish Defense Forces after his summer vacation. “This brigade is an excellent unit. I can’t help feeling sweet bitterness when I have to leave you all. On the other hand, I feel proud to hand over this fine brigade to your new commander, Brigadier General Mieczyslaw Bieniek,” Rimpi said during his farewell comments.

“It is a challenge to succeed such an excellent commander,



(Left to right) Major General Ellis, Brigadier General Bieniek, and Brigadier General Rimpi conduct pass and review of the nine nations stationed at NORDPOL.

and I will of course do the utmost to live up to the standards set by him,” Bieniek explained during his address.

Ellis commented on the contributions made by the Civil Military Cooperation (CIMIC) teams in the area.

“CIMIC achievements have been critical in the resettlement of Doboj. I hope it is a glimpse of the future of cooperation and peace,” Ellis said.

As the ceremony closed and the unit changed commanders, the three officers turned to the NATO flag to salute all nations involved in the maintenance of peace for the Balkan region. Bieniek summarized the peacekeeping effort, “Alone we are nothing, together we are able to achieve everything.”

# Community Prayer Supper held at Camp Dobol Dining Facility

Story and photo by Staff Sergeant Jack McNeely  
196th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

**S**oldiers redeploying from Operation Joint Guard should prepare to "switch gears" from their Army family to their biological family and their friends, says the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment Chaplain.

"We're family," Major Gary Brown, 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment chaplain from Eagle Base, told 2nd Squadron, 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment soldiers here Tuesday, June 16, during the Camp Dobol Community Prayer Supper. The 2/2 ACR redeployed to Fort Polk, La., late this month after providing peace in the Balkans for more than 10 months.

"When you go home, you'll have fond memories of your service during Operation Joint Guard because we are family. Second Squadron did the job well, because it is family," an animated Brown added.

"Now, we are going to have to switch gears and think about our biological families and friends back home," emphasized the 45-year-old Mount Vernon, Ohio, native.

According to Brown, soldiers redeploying from Operation Joint Guard or any other lengthy overseas deployment may have a difficult time adjusting to their families. That's why every soldier who returns home is briefed about their pivotal family reunion, he noted.

"You don't go home and have a power trip. You don't go home and have fights. You go home and thank God you have a family," he told a gathering of more than 50 troops at the Dobol dining facility.

"One thing we should have realized during this 10-month deployment is just how important our families are to us. This is not the time to take your family for granted," Brown advised.

Furthermore, the tall, lanky and humorous chaplain struck another serious chord during his religious message. He urged all soldiers who found religion during Operation Joint Guard to continue walking in the Father's steps when they return to home station.

"If you've begun a journey of faith since you've been here, don't stop. Don't fall under the old saying, 'There's never an atheist in a foxhole.' But when the threat is gone, God is placed back in the closet," he concluded.

Also during the Dobol Prayer Supper, eight soldiers were recognized for their involvement in the base camp's religious programs during the 2/2 ACR's tenure. Those acknowledged were Master Sergeant Mark Hammer, Jewish lay leader; Chief Warrant Officer Samone Tonga and Captain Warren Wells, Latter Day Saint lay leaders; Staff Sergeant Basil C. Meyer and

Captain Dave Sirey, Catholic community; and Staff Sergeant Karl Butts, Sergeant Derek Crooms, First Sergeant Lamar Powell and First Lieutenant Fred Baskins, gospel congregation pastors.

"These men have contributed above and beyond their religious call of duty," said Captain Paul Lasley, squadron chaplain at Dobol.

Lieutenant Colonel Mark Littell, 2/2 ACR commander, also praised the eight. "Free time is a precious thing here at Camp Dobol. And for these men to commit much of their free time to the religious programs is commendable," he said.

Littell, who said he prays daily for the safety of his soldiers and for the foresight of our nation's leaders, added, "That's why religious programs like this are so important — there's somebody much more important than we are."



Major Gary Brown, 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment chaplain, speaks on the importance of family and friends during the Camp Dobol Community Prayer Supper.



## Pulling the "pack" on a Bradley Fighting



Private Gregory T. Barriger directs the crane operator as the maintenance team from Headquarters Company pulls a "Pack" out of a M2A2 Bradley fighting machine.



Private Gregory T. Barriger prepares to pull the "pack" out of the Bradley fighting machine.

Story and photos by Sergeant Tim Fischer  
196th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

**W**hen handling a bundle of steel that weighs more than one ton, safety is of utmost importance. Lifting the "pack" out of a M2A2 Bradley fighting machine requires careful attention and a steady hand because a slip up can cost several hundred thousand dollars and even the lives of soldiers.

With only inches of clearance in any direction, the soldiers of Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment out of Baumholder, Germany recently pulled the engine, transmission, and drive train from their Bradley.

For some soldiers, including Private Gregory T. Barriger, it was a learning experience. "This is the first time I have pulled the 'pack' out of a Bradley," said Barriger. "Through this type of preventive maintenance, I feel confident in the Bradley's ability to perform its peacekeeping mission here in Bosnia."

The 2/6th maintenance section conducted the annual "pulling of the pack" on their M2A2 Bradleys. This annual process includes removing the engine, transmission, and drive train. Once the pack is out of the vehicle, cables are connected in order to start the pack outside of the vehicle compartment. This is commonly referred to as "Ground Hop." Staff Sergeant Joe E. Bishop, the maintenance service noncommissioned officer in charge, explained why this

# Fighting Machine requires steady hand



es to pull the "Pack" out of a M2A2



Private Gregory T. Barriger steadies a Bradley "Pack" after it has been pulled.

is necessary.

"In order to properly check all the working parts of the vehicle we must pull the 'pack' and then start it up outside the hull of the Bradley," said Bishop, a Farmington, N.M. native. "When we do a procedure like this, safety is first and foremost," he continued.

Four people are required to safely pull a pack: one to operate the crane and three to assist in the actual pack extraction from the vehicle. While maintaining the engine's integrity during removal, the soldiers of the 2/6th carefully lift the pack aware that the potential for personal injury is ever present.

"The whole reason this maintenance is so important is with-

out identifying leaks, you are placing the crew of the Bradley at risk," said Barriger, a 20-year-old Columbus, Ind., native. "Once the pack is on the ground, we can inspect for oil, fuel, and exhaust leaks."

The pulling of the pack only takes about a day to complete, and according to Barriger, the entire process must be team-oriented. "Although I have only been out of the Army Advanced Individual Training (AIT) mechanic school for nine months, I have learned the importance of teamwork and safety when dealing with something this large," he said.

The steady hands and attention to detail of the soldiers of the 2/6th, maintain the Bradley's fighting performance and keeps their mission at full strength.



# *Stress, depression, is concern for redeployment of soldiers*

Story and photo by Corporal James E. Baker  
345th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

**R**edeployment is a time of transition that can be either a blessing or a curse for the service member. It is up to the individual with the help of his or her chain command, if necessary, to make the trip back to their home station as smooth as possible.

Service people in Operation Joint Guard have variable tours of duty in Bosnia, but what they all have in common is their eventual return to their friends and families.

"What service people have to be aware of is their expectations when they return," said Camp McGovern Chaplain Alexander Brown. "During an extended deployment, circumstances and people change. For instance, the spouse becomes independent while his or her partner is away. When the service member returns as the head of the household, he or she will have to adjust to these new dynamics in their relationship."

The Department of Defense has mandated a mandatory briefing and screening before redeployment. Units are required to attend a briefing with the post chaplain. The test searches for post traumatic stress disorder; depression; anxiety, and past alcohol abuse.

Service members are advised to find ways to cope with stress that may occur during their deployment. Personal issues should be identified and addressed before they become problems that are out of control.

There are four basic methods of coping with stress according to mental health authorities. They include avoiding stresses; seeing the silver lining; learning to relax; and letting it out.

The mental health section of the Medical Eagle Task Force will see soldiers about a host of issues. Dependent on the nature of the matter, the service member's consultation with the section will be kept confidential. The service member's chain of command will only be involved when the service member's personal safety is at issue.

"If soldiers need to be assessed, their units will find a way to get them down to us at the Blue Factory," said Captain Lloyd

Damm, 1st Armored Division social work officer.

At all posts and bases, advisory services are available to include social work services, Army Community Services, mental health services, chaplain services, and alcohol and drug abuse prevention and control program (ADAPCP).

"Before transportation issues slowed our ability to get out to the respective base camps in theater, the mental health section logged 6,000 miles since October 1997," said First Lieutenant Devvon Bradley, social work officer based at the Blue Factory.

For those soldiers requiring assistance, they should contact



Chaplain Alexander Brown (right), discusses with a soldier some redeployment issues generated from the redeployment guidebook provided. Brown advises soldiers about various personal issues as part of his ongoing mission on the base camp.

their chain of command. Also, other points of contact include the medical aid stations and chaplains at the respective base camps. Communication via either telephone or e-mail consultation with the mental health section is also available.

The service members in Bosnia are well adjusted, according to Major Al Porambo, Task Force psychiatrist. He said, of 8,500 service members, only 500 have sought counseling.

Service members are adjusting to the reality of being on deployment. However, the effort to assure their continual level of performance and overall satisfaction remains the job of not only the service member but also the chain of command.



# First Platoon, 21st MP Co. – Eagle Base

## Quick Reaction Force

Story and photo by Sergeant First Class Sherry L. Claus  
196th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

**W**ith one or two simple words uttered over the radio, First Platoon, 21st Military Police Company (Airborne) Quick Reaction Force (QRF) are ready to rock and roll and can arrive at any location on post before ten minutes have passed.

"The brevity code system we use is instrumental in our being a QRF – when we get the message from Base Defense Operations Center (BDOC), we know exactly where and what the emergency is and what measures to take," explained QRF squad leader Staff Sergeant Gregg S. Bursey, a 27-year-old from St. Cloud, Minn. "Everything is spelled out for us in our book so we don't need to get further details prior to arrival at

the site. This cuts down on radio traffic considerably and allows the radio to be free for future advisories, if needed."

QRF is only one area the three squads of 1st Platoon are involved in at Eagle Base. The squads rotate functions every 72 hours between QRF, Presence Patrols in the area surrounding Eagle Base and specialized training.

The Presence Patrols are both mounted and dismounted and involve soldiers getting out in the nearby communities, becoming familiar with the terrain, businesses and people.

"The best part of my mission here is getting outside the wire and interacting with the locals," said Bursey. "We're always hearing what a great job we are doing here, but once you get out there, you actually see the results of what we do. The people are really happy that we're here – we seem to give them hope for their future."

Thanks to the training cycle of 1st Platoon, all members have become Combat Life Saver qualified, a definite plus for any unit. They have also participated in joint training with the Air Force with Flight Line Certification and response force operations. Random Antiterrorism Measures Program and additional mine awareness training are two more areas the platoon has covered since arriving in country.

According to the Platoon Sergeant, Sergeant First Class Joseph M. Collier, Jr., the 32-member platoon hasn't stopped with required training, either. In spite of the packed schedule his soldiers follow, 1st PLT has earned a cumulative total of about 40 hours college credits since March 1998.

Collier, who lives in Cameron, N.C., is extremely proud of 1st PLT and rightly so.

"As a leader, to have my platoon selected to protect the soldiers of Eagle Base is one of the highlights of my career," said the 34-year-old MP.

His soldiers are proud, too. The experience they are gaining in Bosnia is beneficial to them in many ways as exhibited by their comments about their deployment.

"I see the impact the SFOR presence has provided by a more peaceful environment in Bosnia and I feel good about our part in this mission," said Private First Class Romeo M. Horvath, a 20-year-old M-60 gunner from Oak Harbor, Wash.

One sentiment seems to be universal within the platoon, though. The overall importance of their various missions has not escaped any of the men and women of 1st Platoon.

Private William R. Helton, a 19-year-old driver from California, Ky., perhaps summed it up best.

"Our job here is rather simple, yet needed," said Helton. "With our help, the community is capable of peacefully trying to rebuild their lives, homes and pride."

In the end, isn't that why we are all here?



Specialist Steven C. Rogers, 21st Military Police Company (Airborne) out of Fort Bragg, N.C., prepares for a Quick Reaction Force mission at Eagle Base.

# Commander pins medals on soldiers during ceremonies at Camp Demi

Story and photo by Staff Sergeant Jack McNeely  
196th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

**S**oldiers of the 2nd Squadron, 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment have successfully completed their role as U.S. peacekeepers in the war-torn Balkans, says their proud leader.

"All of you should be very proud of what you have accomplished. Your names will go down in the history books due to your involvement in Operation Joint Guard. I am here to congratulate you personally," Lieutenant Colonel Mark T. Littel told 2/2 ACR soldiers during a trio of troop-size awards ceremonies Sunday, June 14, at Camp Demi.

Littel pinned the NATO Medal for the Former Yugoslavia and the Armed Forces Service Medal on the chests of more

than 200 soldiers at Demi. He also gave over 600 troops at Camp Dobol the same recognition during similar ceremonies held later in the week.

The 2/2 ACR from Fort Polk, La., relinquished control of the two American base camps to the 1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment from Buedingen, Germany, during a Transfer of Authority ceremony at Camp Dobol on Tuesday, June 23.

Other supporting units returning to Fort Polk from Dobol and Demi include Howitzer Battery and the 84th Engineer Company – both permanent members of 2/2 ACR. The 40th Engineer Battalion will accompany the 1/1 Cav and its supporting cast at Dobol and Demi.

Meanwhile, Littel did not waste the opportunity during the awards ceremonies to praise his troops and their many accomplishments while performing nontraditional peacekeeping roles since arriving in Bosnia as early as August 1997.

"From the riots at Brcko, to the implementation meetings in Srebrenica, to the gravesite visits by the Women of Srebrenica, you all have distinguished yourselves as professional soldiers and peacekeepers," Littel said as he stood atop a hardened Humvee beneath a sun-drenched summer sky.

In addition to the high-priority missions, the 2/2 ACR inspected weapons storage facilities and provided countless day and night patrols in some of the most remote areas of Bosnia. The regiment was perhaps handed the most important peacekeeping responsibilities since its 850-square-mile area of responsibility including both sides of the Zone of Separation, a four-kilometer-wide strip of real estate that separates the Federation of Bosnia and the Republika Srpska.

Also, 2/2 ACR troops guarded strategic radio control towers atop such summits as Mount Vis, Mount Zep and Hill 1326. Members of Fox Troop were the last soldiers to occupy Sierra-10, the last checkpoint between the Muslim-held Federation city of Tuzla and the Serb-held Republika Srpska city of Zvornik. Sierra-10 closed in March.

According to Command Sergeant Major James Green, the near-year-long deployment offered his enlisted soldiers an opportunity to train in a real life environment. "This experience is invaluable, especially for the noncommissioned officers who were responsible for leading these young men and women during this unique mission," he said.

Despite the promise of a speedy return home to Fort Polk by the end of the month, Littel also urged his troops to stay focused on their mission during the final days in Bosnia.

"We do not need to get complacent because we're going home. We need to keep our guard up and help our Cavalry brothers from the 1/1 Cav during this transition period," he added.

The 1/1 Cav will inherit the peacekeeping role through October, in preparation of the 1st Cavalry Division from Fort Hood, Texas.



Lieutenant Colonel Mark T. Littel, commander of 2nd Squadron, 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment, spent the majority of his last two weeks in Bosnia pinning the NATO medal and Armed Forces Service Medal on the chests of every single 2/2 ACR troop that has participated in Operation Joint Guard.



# Camp McGovern moving into comfort zone with SEA huts

Story and photo by Sergeant Terry L. Welch  
345th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

One month to the day after construction began on Southeast Asia huts (SEA huts) at Camp McGovern, soldiers began moving into the first four of the hard-sided shelters on June 11, 1998, marking a new era of quality of life at the camp.

The SEA huts, built through the joint efforts of Brown and Root and Seabees from Naval Mobile Construction Battalion-

133, have turned the camp's middle into a western movie backdrop. There are five individual huts in each shelter. Four shelters face each other across a quad.

But this is not a traditional SEA hut. Each five-hut shelter has its own abolition (shower/latrine) unit installed and a covered, wooden boardwalk that provides soldiers weatherproof access to them.

Soldiers have already made themselves at home in the first quad – the second opened June 18 – but many still seem surprised by their new found comfort. “We were up in Slavonski Brod, living in tents and we came down here and expected a lot worse,” said Brighton, Mich., native Private First Class Doug Bessette, Company D, 1st Battalion, 35th Armor. “Now we’re getting these, and they’re air-conditioned and have heat, a lot of room and outlets, everything. We’re real happy with them.”

A small luxury, the covered walkways seem to be appreciated as well. Specialist Brian Muller of Ozark, Ark., is attached to the 703rd Ordnance Company (EOD) from Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1st Battalion, 35th Armor for on the job training as he reclassifies for the EOD field. Muller said that it’s nice to have a place to be outside without getting rained on. Standing under the “porch” roof on a recent rainy day, Muller said that in the tents, you didn’t even have to be outside to get rained on. “On rainy days like today, a lot of our stuff would probably be getting wet,” he said. “Everybody would be running outside in the rain, buttoning up and putting our stuff up on our cots to keep it dry. Now, it’s sealed tight.”

The insulation that works to keep the huts from heating up or cooling down too much also has the added benefit of keeping noises from outside from interfering with the peace and quiet of the soldiers inside. Of course, it doesn’t help deaden noises inside the huts. “The noise level is a lot better,” Muller said. “Our team leader, Staff Sergeant (Phil) Clark, he snores real loud at night. Sometimes he keeps us up, but before he’d wake up people a couple of tents down. Now it’s just us that have to listen to it.”

With so many amenities, the SEA huts have a positive affect on the mission by contributing to increased morale. “When you’re out doing a patrol,” said Private First Class Marshall Morgan III, a member of Company D, 1/35, from Cheyenne, Wyo. “You can have a better time doing it ‘cause you know you can come to a comfortable, airconditioned area.”

Bessette seconded that statement, saying that the high operational tempo can be made easier by simply having comfortable living quarters. “We’re out a lot, but when we come back, it’s good to have a nice place to come back to,” he said.

Two quads have been completed at this point, but plans have been made to get all of McGovern’s soldiers into SEA huts by the end of this summer.



Private First Class Gary Christie, 3rd Platoon, D Company, 1/35 Armor, adjusts a photograph on his wardrobe after moving into a SEA hut.

# "Met" makes last flight from McGovern

Story and photo by Sergeant Terry L. Welch  
345th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

On June 15th, 1st Armored Division's Division Artillery held a "silencing of the guns" ceremony which effectively marked the end of artillery's role in Operation Joint Guard. Earlier that morning, however, the 197th Field Artillery Brigade Meteorological Section – a National Guard Unit based in Manchester, N.H. – ended its mission as well.

There was no fanfare. There was no ceremony.

If you had happened to look toward the east side of Camp McGovern that morning, you might have seen the only sign that the section was closing up shop in the form of the last weather balloon flight that the unit would perform in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The members of the "Met" section didn't really care if their last mission was noticed, though. In fact, since the unit arrived at McGovern on January 19th of this year, they say they've grown accustomed to being a "misunderstood" piece of the artillery puzzle. They, for one, know the importance of a meteorological report – known in field artillery slang as a "Met" – to the firing of artillery. "Other than computing how much powder to put in the gun," pointed out section leader Sergeant First Class Gary Philbrick, a Manchester, N.H. resident, "if the (artillery batteries) don't have the correct "Met", they won't hit their target. The wind will throw it off. It's that simple."

It isn't that the soldiers feel under-appreciated. Specialist Brendan Daley, who hails from Derry, N.H., said that it has only been the people who are new to artillery who have yet to understand the importance of meteorological reports. "We've gotten a considerable amount of respect from the officers of Bravo (Battery, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Field Artillery Regiment) and Alpha – their predecessors – telling their soldiers in front of us that "Met" is crucial to their guns.

"A round being off 200 meters could be the difference between a critical ammunition depot and a schoolhouse," Daley added.

Sergeant Edward Piscopo echoed Daley's sentiment. "It's a matter of adjusting the target two or three times

or, with the correct 'Met', hitting it on the first try," said the Manchester native.

The basic concept behind what the "Met" soldiers do is this: a balloon, with an attached data recorder/transmitter, known as a radiosonde, is released into the atmosphere. As it rises, it relays information back to a radio directional finder antenna, which is then sent through two weather computers before being transmitted digitally to a fire direction control center.

As the soldiers of the 197th FA Bde Met begin preparations for their return to New Hampshire, they noted that, while they have only had one opportunity to use their data in an actual firing situation (with B Battery 2/3 FA at Glamoc during Exercise Dynamic Response), they have become a better unit while deployed to Bosnia. Piscopo said that before, they knew how to perform their mission, but now they know better why they perform certain tasks. "We've picked apart a lot of the little intricacies that have to do with the balloon itself and the data and what it does," he said.

The "Met" soldiers also learned from sharing ideas within their community, a rare treat according to Daley. "We're a very small breed of MOS," he said. "I've talked with people who've been in 20 years who've never worked with another "Met" section. I've had the benefit (in Bosnia) of speaking with two other 'regular' Army units and two other National Guard units."

They've also learned a lot from – and about – each other. Not one member of the six-person unit started out in "Met." "We all started our military careers in another MOS, and on the civilian side, we've got everybody from multi-billion dollar corporation (employees) to construction workers," Piscopo said. "We've got a general melting pot of both civilian and military careers."

"As a group, I have yet to see a better group of people buckle down and get the job done," added Philbrick. "We've learned to live with each other to complete the mission."

After 163 balloon flights, the New Hampshire Guardsmen will leave Bosnia on June 26th. They say that once they're home, the only thoughts they will give to the weather for a while, will concern how it will affect their fishing.